United Nations S/2008/631

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 October 2008

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1808 (2008) of 15 April 2008, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 15 October 2008. It provides an update of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, since my report of 23 July 2008 (S/2008/480).

2. My Special Representative, Jean Arnault, led the Mission until 30 September. He was succeeded by Johan Verbeke, who has been in close contact with Member States and international organizations working in Georgia. The Chief Military Observer, Major General Niaz Muhammad Khan Khattak (Pakistan), who completed his tour of duty and left the Mission on 25 August, was succeeded by Major General Anwar Hussain (Bangladesh). The strength of UNOMIG on 20 September 2008 stood at 134 military observers (including 12 medical personnel) and 17 police advisers (see annex).

II. Political process and major developments

3. During the reporting period, the situation in the Mission's area of responsibility witnessed dramatic changes following the outbreak of hostilities in South Ossetia on 7 and 8 August. Throughout that period, my Special Representative and the leadership of UNOMIG maintained regular contacts with both sides, with the representatives of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and with the leadership of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

4. Before the events in August, UNOMIG assisted the efforts of Germany as the Coordinator of the Group of Friends to advance a plan for the settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. The plan was proposed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and presented to the sides during his visit to the region in mid-July. It contemplated a three-phase process: the first phase envisaged agreements on security measures, including a declaration on the non-use of force, and on the principle of, and modalities for, the return of internally displaced persons and refugees; the second phase envisaged economic rehabilitation and a broad array of confidence-building measures; and the third and final phase

envisaged discussions on the political status of Abkhazia. The Mission facilitated visits to Sukhumi by the German Ambassador as part of his Government's effort to convene a meeting in Berlin with the participation of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides and the Group of Friends. UNOMIG also facilitated a visit to Sukhumi at the end of July by Matthew Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and senior representative of the United States of America in the Group of Friends.

5. The Georgian and Abkhaz sides expressed gratitude for the German initiative and stated their readiness to participate in a meeting in Berlin. At the same time, they predicated their support for the proposed plan on a number of conditions. The Georgian side reiterated its demand that a number of decisions made by the Russian Federation in April and May (see S/2008/480, paras. 8-10) be reversed. The Abkhaz side stressed once again that a commitment by Georgia to the non-use of force and its withdrawal from the Kodori Valley were prerequisites for the start of any talks. It also requested that the meeting in Berlin, initially scheduled for the end of July, be postponed to a later date. On 4 August, as exchanges of fire between the Georgian and South Ossetian sides during the first days of the month intensified, the Abkhaz side announced the postponement of its participation in the meeting until the situation in South Ossetia de-escalated. It also warned that "if Georgia starts fighting against South Ossetia, Abkhazia will open a second front".

6. In late July and early August, tensions between Georgia and Russia continued to rise. Russian officials increasingly insisted that the Georgian side sign non-use of force agreements with the Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides to defuse tensions on the ground and restore confidence as a basis for negotiation. They also suggested that the issue of the return of displaced persons and refugees be addressed at some later stage. For their part, the Georgian officials continued to accuse the Russian Federation of attempting to annex Georgian territories and repeated their demands that both the negotiations and peacekeeping formats be further internationalized.

7. The dramatic escalation of hostilities in South Ossetia on 7 and 8 August and the subsequent Georgian-Russian conflict profoundly affected the situation in the Georgian-Abkhaz zone of conflict and the overall conflict-settlement process. The mandate of UNOMIG is limited to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, and the Mission is therefore not in a position to describe the conduct of military operations in and around South Ossetia. This present report refers only to information on operations carried out in and around the Mission's area of responsibility, whether obtained directly by the Mission or from credible sources.

8. Starting in the early hours of 9 August, Russian forces reportedly carried out aerial attacks in western Georgia, including on the Senaki military base and military targets in the port of Poti, as well as around the town of Zugdidi. On 10 and 11 August, the Russian Federation introduced large numbers of troops into the zone of conflict by road, rail and air. While the troops were initially deployed on the Gali side of the ceasefire line, they were later moved into the Zugdidi side of the zone of conflict and adjacent areas in Senaki and Poti. Russian navy ships were deployed along the coast.

9. On 8 August, the Abkhaz side began introducing heavy weapons into the restricted weapons zone in violation of the 1994 Moscow Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces (see S/1994/583, annex I). During the afternoon of 9 August, a series of bombardments was carried out in the upper Kodori Valley. On 12 August, the Abkhaz side launched a ground attack and established control over

the upper Kodori Valley. The local population and Georgian armed personnel had left the Valley shortly before the arrival of the Abkhaz forces.

10. The launch by the Georgian side of large-scale operations in South Ossetia in August only strengthened the Abkhaz side's perception of being a likely target. That perception was reinforced after the reported seizure in the upper Kodori Valley of a number of heavy artillery pieces that had been barred under the 1994 Moscow Agreement. The Abkhaz side criticized UNOMIG for failing to uncover those heavy weapons and questioned the ability of the international community to contribute to the preservation of peace in the region. In this connection, it is worth recalling that I had called for the strengthening of the Mission's monitoring capacity in my previous reports to the Council.

11. On 12 August, the French presidency of the European Union (EU) visited Moscow and Tbilisi. The discussions led to the formulation of a six-point ceasefire plan which contained provisions that also affected the situation in the UNOMIG area of responsibility.

12. On 26 August, the President of the Russian Federation stated that the attack by Georgia on South Ossetia had left Russia with no choice but to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent States. The Abkhaz side greeted Russia's decision as "historic". The Georgian side called it illegitimate and a violation of the fundamental principles and norms of international law and numerous Security Council resolutions. The Georgian leadership also characterized Russia's actions as an attempt to legitimize "the use of violence, direct military aggression and ethnic cleansing aimed at changing the borders of a neighbouring State". In response to strong international criticism and support expressed for Georgia's territorial integrity, the Russian Federation stated that any return to status quo ante was no longer possible in the light of the genocide in South Ossetia.

13. On 28 August, the Parliament of Georgia passed a unanimous resolution declaring Abkhazia and South Ossetia territories occupied by the Russian Federation and the Russian peacekeepers an occupying force. Georgia subsequently severed diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation.

14. On 29 August, the Government of Georgia declared that the 1994 Moscow Agreement was null and void. It reiterated its commitment to the six-point ceasefire plan of 12 August and related subsequent explanations by President Sarkozy as the only valid basis for conflict resolution. Considering that the Georgian decision removed any restrictions imposed on it by the 1994 Moscow Agreement, the Abkhaz side announced its intention to reinforce the "State border" as a priority matter. On 1 September, in a note to the CIS Executive Council, Georgia provided notification of its decision to terminate the CIS peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, Georgia. Georgia also withdrew, effective 18 August, from the CIS and from several related key agreements.

15. On 8 September, the French presidency of the European Union and the President of the Russian Federation elaborated a number of provisions for the implementation of the six-point plan of 12 August which were agreed upon on the same day by the President of Georgia. Among those provisions, it was reaffirmed that UNOMIG observers would continue to carry out their mandate in their areas of responsibility at the same personnel levels and deployment pattern as had existed on

7 August 2008, subject to possible future adjustments decided on by the Security Council.

16. On 9 September, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Abkhaz de facto Foreign Minister signed a document establishing formal diplomatic relations. This was followed by an official visit by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to Sukhumi on 14 September and the signing of an agreement on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance in Moscow on 17 September, which, inter alia, envisaged cooperation in the economic, legal and security fields, including the construction and use of military bases.

17. On 25 September, a car bomb exploded in front of the building of the Abkhaz de facto security service in Sukhumi. The building and several adjacent apartment buildings were severely damaged, but no casualties were reported. The Abkhaz de facto authorities accused the Georgian special services of being responsible for the blast. The Georgian authorities denied any involvement.

III. Developments in the Mission's area of responsibility

18. The operation undertaken by the Russian Federation affected the situation in the area of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and beyond. Reportedly, 9,000 troops and 350 units of armoured vehicles took part in the operation. The troops were not part of the CIS peacekeeping force and were therefore clearly acting outside the 1994 Moscow Agreement. The Russian Federation called this introduction of troops a "peace enforcement operation". The Government of Georgia characterized it as an "aggression".

19. UNOMIG was not in a position to ascertain the precise number and character of the newly introduced troops. In the Mission's estimate, approximately four to five Russian airborne battalions with supporting elements were introduced into or passed southbound through the zone of conflict after 10 August. In keeping with its mandate, UNOMIG did not monitor areas outside the zone of conflict where some of the newly introduced Russian troops were deployed.

20. After 22 August, the Mission observed a sizeable number of northbound Russian troops departing the Zugdidi area and then leaving the zone of conflict. The CIS peacekeeping force established six new posts on the outer perimeter of the restricted weapons zone on the Zugdidi side and four additional posts in the outskirts of Senaki and near Poti, outside the zone of conflict. By 13 September, the CIS peacekeeping force had withdrawn five of the new posts, including from Senaki and Poti, under the agreement reached on 8 September in Moscow.

21. On 8 September, the leadership of the CIS peacekeeping force informed UNOMIG that its strength stood at 2,542 troops, with a battalion deployed in each of the two sectors and in the Kodori Valley.

Gali sector

22. The situation in the Gali sector has been tense in the aftermath of the 6 July explosion in the town of Gali (see S/2008/480, para. 25), the ensuing restrictions on crossing the ceasefire line and general fears among the local population of an impending resumption of hostilities.

23. On 20 July, an explosion near an Abkhaz de facto security post in the village of Tagiloni killed one member of the Abkhaz de facto security service. The incident was reportedly a suicide through the activation of a grenade.

24. From 8 to 11 August, significant movements of the Abkhaz military were observed along the M27 road. UNOMIG issued three violation reports to the Abkhaz side for the presence of heavy military equipment in the restricted weapons zone, which the Abkhaz side refused to sign. On 10 August, the Abkhaz de facto authorities introduced martial law in the districts of Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli and announced partial mobilization.

25. UNOMIG patrols were denied freedom of movement and threatened with weapons on several occasions by Abkhaz servicemen. A total of seven violation reports involving nine cases of restriction of movement were issued to the Abkhaz side. UNOMIG had to limit and then suspend its patrolling altogether in the lower Gali area, with the exception of patrols along the M27 road, after instances of intimidation of patrol members, reported mine threats and the alleged presence of partisan groups.

26. UNOMIG resumed its regular patrolling on 4 September after the Abkhaz side confirmed that partisan groups were no longer operating in the district of Gali and Halo Trusts, a non-governmental organization engaged in mine clearance, informed the Mission that there was no mine threat to its operations in the district.

27. During the period under review, the crimes reported to UNOMIG included four homicides, three attempted homicides and two robberies.

28. On 29 August, an explosion produced by three mines planted by the side of a country road near the village of Meore Otobaya targeted an Abkhaz de facto police car. No injury was reported. On 10 September, an explosive device was found in a private car belonging to a de facto army recruitment officer. The explosive device was neutralized, and no injury or damage occurred. On 14 September, a mine exploded in the vicinity of the village of Chuburkhinji damaging an excavator carrying two CIS peacekeeping force personnel who were not harmed.

29. The United Nations police continued to liaise with the Abkhaz de facto law enforcement agencies in the districts of Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli. Six training courses in forensics, police management and other policing skills were held for 32 Abkhaz de facto police officers. The United Nations police also conducted visits to the local de facto law enforcement facilities and held meetings with the Abkhaz de facto police commanding staff. As part of the project to establish libraries for the local law enforcement agencies, 1,200 copies of four reference books in criminal law, criminal procedure law and police tactics were donated to the local de facto law enforcement agencies. The United Nations police organized training courses for 1,126 children in Gali, Ochamchira, Tkvarcheli and Sukhumi which were funded by the Government of Switzerland.

30. The UNOMIG Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, monitored the effects of the closing of the ceasefire line by the Abkhaz side on the local population in July. The closing prevented local residents on the Georgian-controlled side of the ceasefire line from obtaining supplies at more affordable prices. Reports indicated that local residents had been asked to pay increasingly higher discretionary fees in order to cross the ceasefire line. Otherwise, movement was allowed only in cases of medical need.

31. Although the Human Rights Office had to suspend its regular monitoring activities while UNOMIG patrols were suspended, the human rights officers maintained regular contact with NGOs and civil society in the district of Gali. They received no reports of human rights violations in the Gali area during the developments that took place in August.

32. The Human Rights Office resumed its normal monitoring activities in the district of Gali on 4 September. There were reports that the unstable situation had had negative effects on the hazelnut harvesting season, which had begun in August. Residents in some villages in the lower Gali area reported that they were afraid of harvesting the crop. Others reported being afraid to travel to the Gali market to sell the hazelnuts. With the improvement in the security situation, most families slowly resumed harvesting. However, they still feared becoming the target of criminal actions, including being subjected to unregulated levies occasionally imposed on the residents.

Zugdidi sector

33. In the Zugdidi sector, the situation was tense even before the events in August, due mainly to serious disagreements between the CIS peacekeeping force and Georgian law enforcement representatives. The tensions led to the suspension in July of the sector-level tripartite meetings which, by bringing together the Georgian side, the CIS peacekeeping force and UNOMIG, had served as a forum for resolving operational issues at the working level. The situation in the Zugdidi sector was also tense due to the persistent claims by Georgian officials of impending Russian and Abkhaz military operations targeting the Kodori Valley.

34. In the early hours of 9 August, aircraft were observed flying over the district of Zugdidi. It was later reported that the railway station and the military base in Senaki and the seaport of Poti — all located outside the zone of conflict — had come under aerial bombardment, reportedly causing damage to infrastructure and equipment and resulting in human casualties. On 10 August, an air attack was reported on the Georgian signals unit south of the village of Urta.

35. Late on 10 August, a meeting was held at a post of the CIS peacekeeping force in the village of Khurcha near the ceasefire line among senior representatives of the Zugdidi administration, the CIS peacekeeping force and Georgian law enforcement agencies, with the participation of UNOMIG. The meeting resulted in an understanding that one Russian airborne battalion would be deployed on the Zugdidi side of the ceasefire line for a limited period of time. On the basis of its observations in the following days, UNOMIG assessed that four to five Russian airborne battalions had been introduced into the Zugdidi side of the zone of conflict and beyond and had taken control of the area.

36. The air bombardments on 10 August of targets in the district of Zugdidi and outside of the restricted weapons zone caused significant anxiety among the local population. The population of the town of Zugdidi appeared to be in a state of panic during the early hours of the day. Rumours and media reports that the town was about to be bombed by Russian jets and that the CIS peacekeeping force would allow the Abkhaz military forces to attack the town resulted in a massive departure of the population, especially women and children. By 11 August, very few residents were seen in the town. But by 13 August, the population had returned, a majority of

shops had reopened and life in the town had returned to normal. The continued presence of UNOMIG in Zugdidi helped to reassure the population.

37. On 11 August, a senior Georgian representative in Zugdidi informed UNOMIG that the CIS peacekeeping force had issued an ultimatum to all Georgian law enforcement agencies in the Zugdidi area to surrender all weapons. At the request of UNOMIG, the leadership of the CIS peacekeeping force agreed to allow law enforcement personnel to carry side arms while on duty. Later that day, UNOMIG patrols observed that Georgian security posts at the ceasefire line that had been manned by special police forces had been abandoned. Georgian criminal police and guard and patrol police, however, remained on duty in the Zugdidi sector with side arms. The same day, the CIS peacekeeping force occupied five buildings, most of them belonging to the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs; all buildings were vacated by 22 August.

38. On 12 August, Abkhaz armed personnel entered the Ganmukhuri and Khurcha pockets north of the Inguri River on the Zugdidi side of the ceasefire line. At that time, the CIS peacekeeping force posts in those areas were vacant or thinly manned. When Abkhaz armed personnel occupied an abandoned Georgian security post near the village of Khurcha, the majority of the village residents left their homes. Many residents of the Ganmukhuri area also left with the arrival of the Abkhaz forces. In response to the Mission's concerns about the situation, the CIS peacekeeping force leadership assured that its observation posts would be brought to previous manning levels and that Abkhaz forces would be compelled to withdraw and to not cross the ceasefire line. With the return of the CIS peacekeepers to their posts in Ganmukhuri and Khurcha on 9 September, the Abkhaz forces left and the residents returned.

39. An incident occurred on 17 August in which two Abkhaz personnel were killed and two more wounded as a result of a landmine explosion in the Ganmukhuri area, close to the patriotic youth camp. On 19 August, a UNOMIG patrol observed that all the wooden buildings in the Ganmukhuri patriotic youth camp had been burned. On 13 September, a Georgian police officer was shot and killed in the Ganmukhuri area, allegedly by persons who had crossed the ceasefire line from the Abkhaz side. On 21 September, one Georgian policeman was shot dead and three more were injured at a Ministry of Internal Affairs post in the village of Khurcha. The next day, an explosion occurred in the same area, injuring two Georgian policemen. The Georgian side accused the Russian and Abkhaz sides of being responsible for those incidents. UNOMIG is investigating.

40. From 11 to 15 August, Abkhaz forces occasionally crossed the ceasefire line, entering villages in the north of the Zugdidi sector. They reportedly removed Georgian flags from administrative buildings but did not harm anyone. After the admonishment of the CIS peacekeeping force, the Abkhaz returned to the Abkhaz-controlled side of the ceasefire line. Unlike in Ganmukhuri and Khurcha, at no time did the Abkhaz forces maintain a presence in the villages.

41. The criminal incidents reported to UNOMIG during the period under review included 3 homicides, 11 robberies and 6 abductions.

42. Owing to the developments in August, the United Nations police intensified its contacts with the Georgian police. It conducted joint patrols with the local police, regularly visited law enforcement facilities and met with the Georgian police commanding staff. The United Nations police arranged four training courses for 60

police officers, including a training course in police tactics conducted by experts from the Ministry of the Interior of Ukraine. In early August, it conducted a public opinion survey on Georgian police performance in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. As part of the community-policing programme, the United Nations police arranged training in traffic safety for about 2,000 schoolchildren funded by the Government of Switzerland and facilitated the rehabilitation of a kindergarten in the village of Zhgvaia funded by the Government of Germany.

Kodori Valley

43. Following the clash on 9 July between Georgian and Abkhaz forces in the strategically located Achamkhara area in the lower Kodori Valley (see S/2008/480 para. 52), the situation in the area became very tense. The tensions rose further after allegations by the Georgian side of mortar firing by the Abkhaz side into the Kvabchara valley (a side valley north of the Kodori Valley) on 26 July. UNOMIG began conducting independent investigations into both incidents, but had to suspend them because of the events in August.

44. The Georgian side repeatedly claimed that they had information regarding an impending Abkhaz and/or Russian offensive into the valley, whereas the Abkhaz side made allegations of a build-up of Georgian troops there. Both sides also made claims that the other was hiding heavy military equipment in the section of the Valley under their control.

45. On 9 August, the Abkhaz de facto authorities requested UNOMIG to leave immediately its team base in Adjara in the upper Kodori Valley. When exiting through the lower Kodori Valley, the patrol heard sounds of an aerial attack from the direction of the upper Kodori Valley. It also saw a convoy of Abkhaz tanks and military personnel in the lower Kodori Valley. On the same day, the Abkhaz de facto Ministry of Defence declared that aerial strikes had been carried out on the military infrastructure in the upper Kodori Valley. The local population and Georgian servicemen left the upper Kodori Valley prior to the arrival of the Abkhaz forces.

46. After entering the Kodori Valley, the Abkhaz side reported to have found heavy weapons, including artillery and multiple rocket launchers, a large number of automatic weapons — some burned — and large quantities of ammunition. It also claimed to have found evidence of the presence of personnel of the Georgian Ministry of Defence and accommodation facilities suitable for some thousands of personnel. While the monitoring capacity of UNOMIG is limited, in particular in the Kodori Valley, the Mission has indicated that, according to its observations, the infrastructure in the upper Kodori Valley was suitable for the accommodation of personnel in numbers exceeding those officially provided by the Georgian side.

47. UNOMIG has not been able to resume its regular patrolling of the Kodori Valley since its team withdrew on 9 August as the CIS peacekeeping force indicated that the safety of UNOMIG staff could not be guaranteed. Reports pointed to a significant risk posed by explosive remnants of war, making movement through the Valley difficult and dangerous. On 7 September, UNOMIG, accompanied by the CIS peacekeeping force, conducted a special patrol to the Kodori Valley. Abkhaz forces were occupying the entire Valley and a battalion of the CIS peacekeeping force was stationed there. The UNOMIG Kodori team base in Adjara was occupied by Abkhaz personnel. All the movable assets that had been left at the Adjara base on 9 August were missing. A few local residents remained in the upper Kodori Valley. On

16 September, UNOMIG attempted to conduct a regular joint patrol with the CIS peacekeeping force to the upper Kodori Valley but was compelled to return because of reports of unexploded ordnance along the way.

Mission-wide developments

48. The weekly quadripartite meetings have remained suspended since the end of October 2006. Although the work of the UNOMIG fact-finding team on outstanding investigation cases had to be suspended due to the events in August, it resumed in September.

49. On 11 September, in Sukhumi, the United Nations police organized an international round-table discussion on prevention of drug abuse by minors, with participation of local and international experts as well as representatives of the Abkhaz de facto authorities and international organizations.

IV. Cooperation with the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States

50. UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force continued to maintain close cooperation in fulfilling their respective mandates. The developments in August, however, led to some difficulties in communication between the UNOMIG sector commanders and the respective CIS peacekeeping force commanders on the ground. Nonetheless, cooperation at the leadership level remained close and effective, especially during critical moments.

V. Human rights issues

51. During the reporting period, the UNOMIG Human Rights Office continued its efforts to promote human rights protection and to provide support to local NGOs. The Office continued to conduct monitoring visits to detention facilities, to monitor court trials and to provide legal advisory services to the local population, except when its activities in the zone of conflict were restricted due to the events in August. Its office in Sukhumi continued to register claims which related generally to due process and the right to a fair trial, the right to individual security and the treatment of detainees as well as property rights issues.

52. The Human Rights Office continued to facilitate the Assisting Communities Together project, which promotes small grants to local NGOs to carry out human rights education and training projects at the grass-roots level. The project is funded jointly by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Office continued to support the Human Rights Centres at Sukhumi University and in Gali.

VI. Humanitarian and rehabilitation activities

53. During the reporting period, through its trust fund, the Mission completed repair and rehabilitation of the water supply system in a village hospital in the Gali

sector. Rehabilitation work continued on the hospital in the town of Gali and on a youth centre in Ochamchira. A training project for 24 detainees at Dranda prison, aimed at facilitating their reintegration into society, was completed on 12 August.

54. UNDP continued to rehabilitate the water supply systems in the districts of Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira. All water rehabilitation activities were implemented with the active participation of different ethnic groups, including Georgians, Abkhaz, Greeks and Armenians. In support of this effort, UNDP established and trained a group of village water operators. UNDP also trained 93 female entrepreneurs in business management and business plan development and assisted 60 local farmers' groups in strengthening their pest management capacity in the districts of Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli. Whereas some of those activities had to be temporarily suspended during the events in August, they resumed in early September when the security situation allowed the projects to go forward.

55. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in coordination with its partners, continued to implement the "Strategic directions for Abkhazia" project, including community-based protection and confidence-building activities, education-related projects, basic shelter repair, income generation, agricultural support and training activities. These activities had to be suspended in August due to the mobilization of all UNHCR staff for the emergency response, but resumed in early September. From 12 to 18 August, UNHCR and its implementing partners assisted approximately 1,000 internally displaced persons from the upper Kodori Valley, who were transported to Kutaisi where the Government of Georgia provided them with temporary accommodation.

56. The Danish Refugee Council continued work on shelter rehabilitation of 240 houses in the lower Gali area along with the distribution of food security and business grants. It also supported small- and medium-size enterprises and eight small community infrastructure projects in the districts of Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli. After some difficulties in the implementation of projects owing to the developments in August, those efforts have since resumed.

57. The World Food Programme (WFP), in partnership with World Vision International, continued to assist the most vulnerable population groups through its food-for-work programme aimed at rehabilitating the agricultural infrastructure for 9,400 beneficiaries in the districts of Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli. WFP distributed 220 tons of mixed commodities and approved six new fish pond projects. In cooperation with Doctors without Borders, WFP also provided food to 70 tuberculosis patients in the Gulripsh hospital. The United Nations Children's Fund continued the preparation for a mass-immunization campaign against measles and rubella but had to suspend those efforts owing to the developments in August.

VII. Mission support

58. UNOMIG continued its HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programme during the reporting period. The Mission held training sessions for incoming personnel and distributed and displayed materials in the Mission area. It continued to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and welcomed the expansion of the role and contribution of women among the military personnel. The Mission continued to deliver induction briefings on gender equality in peacekeeping to all incoming personnel, and it began using a new

misconduct tracking system database introduced in field missions in July, which serves as the central repository for information related to misconduct cases. The Mission also translated training materials and other documents from English into languages of the Mission area in an effort to increase awareness among national staff.

VIII. Financial aspects

59. The General Assembly, by its resolution 62/260, appropriated the amount of $34.5 million for the maintenance of UNOMIG for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIG beyond 15 October 2008, the cost of maintaining the Mission would be limited to the amount approved by the General Assembly.

60. As at 30 June 2008, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNOMIG amounted to $11.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1,671.4 million.

61. Reimbursement for medical facilities provided to UNOMIG by the Government of Germany has been made for the period until 31 December 2006. As at 19 September 2008, the amount owed for the medical facilities totalled $133,319.

IX. Observations

62. The tragic developments of August 2008, which inflicted human suffering and risked destabilizing the wider region, were not entirely unexpected. Over the past few years, I have highlighted the very serious deterioration in the relations between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, which had reached their worst level in years in the second quarter of 2008. I pointed out, in particular, the growing scepticism of both sides regarding the possibility of reaching a negotiated solution to the conflict. During the same period, relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation became increasingly tense. In my July report to the Security Council (S/2008/480), I stated that "by many accounts, the chain of events that began to unfold in March 2008 brought the Georgian, Abkhaz and CIS peacekeeping forces close to major confrontation in the second half of April". Finally, a number of external developments, including those related to Kosovo, contributed to a general climate of polarization in which joint international action to contain local conflicts became more and more difficult.

63. Almost two months after the end of hostilities, the military situation on the ground has not yet been fully clarified, and consultations are ongoing with regard to the establishment of the international mechanisms envisaged in the 12 August ceasefire agreement to prevent a recurrence of war. At the same time, the context in which UNOMIG has operated during the past 14 years has changed considerably. It is not yet known which features, if any, of the 1994 Moscow Agreement that forms the basis of the Mission's observation mandate will be retained when the current security discussions conclude. In particular, there is as yet little clarity as to the future status of what has so far constituted the area of responsibility of UNOMIG, namely the security zone, where no military presence was permitted, the restricted weapons zone, where no heavy weapons could be introduced, and the Kodori Valley.

In addition, in view of the official statements and decisions of Georgia and the Russian Federation, it seems unlikely that the CIS peacekeeping force will have any role in the separation of forces between the two sides, and it is still unclear what arrangement, if any, will fulfil this function.

64. Under these circumstances, it is too early at this stage to define the role that UNOMIG may play in the future. But as long as international involvement in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict is seen as helping to prevent future conflict, UNOMIG may be called upon to make a contribution. In this respect, I have received formal indications from the Georgian and Abkhaz sides that they support the continuation of the Mission. At the same time, as was to be expected, differences between the two sides have already surfaced. Those differences will have to be addressed. In this respect as well, the Mission's contribution will continue to be important and its good offices role, in particular, could be as relevant as ever in seeking to resolve the multiplicity of issues that are bound to emerge in the upcoming period.

65. It is in this context that I recommend to the Security Council that it extend the mandate of the Mission on a technical basis for a period of four months, until 15 February 2009. While the role of UNOMIG may need to be adjusted, I do believe that the United Nations should continue to place the experience of UNOMIG at the disposal of the two sides and the international community in order to respond in the best possible way to the demands of conflict prevention and conflict resolution. In the coming four months, my Special Representative and I intend to intensify consultations with the two sides and with the relevant international actors, including at the Geneva talks, with a view to exploring whether and how it is possible for the United Nations to follow up on the support of the two sides for the continuation of United Nations involvement. Before the end of the technical extension, I propose to report to the Council on the outcome of those consultations. At this juncture, I would like to point out that any future arrangements would have to ensure the non-resumption of hostilities and the protection of all vulnerable groups. This should constitute a basic common goal for the international community, which the Security Council should not fail to achieve.

66. In conclusion, I would like to thank Mr. Arnault for his dedicated service as my Special Representative during the last two challenging years. His professionalism and integrity were instrumental in maintaining the role of the United Nations as impartial mediator and peacekeeper. I would also like to express my appreciation to the outgoing Chief Military Observer, Major General Niaz Muhammad Khan Khattak, and to all UNOMIG staff for their outstanding performance, including during the developments in August. Through their presence and actions on the ground, they helped prevent a major escalation in the Mission's area of responsibility.

Annex

A. Countries providing military observers (as at 20 September 2008)

Country	*Number of military observers*
Albania	3
Austria	2
Bangladesh	7[a]
Croatia	3
Czech Republic	5
Denmark	5
Egypt	5
France	3
Germany	15[b]
Ghana	1
Greece	4
Hungary	7
Indonesia	4
Jordan	7
Lithuania	2
Moldova	1
Mongolia	1
Nepal	1
Nigeria	1
Pakistan	10
Poland	5
Republic of Korea	7
Romania	2
Russia	4
Sweden	3
Switzerland	4
Turkey	5
Ukraine	5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	5
United States of America	2
Uruguay	3
Yemen	2
Total	**134**

B. Countries providing civilian police personnel (as of 20 September 2008)

Country	*Number of civilian police personnel*
Czech Republic	2
Germany	4
Ghana	1
Israel	1
Poland	2
Russian Federation	2
Sweden	2
Switzerland	2
Ukraine	1[c]
Total	**17**

[a] Includes the Chief Military Observer.
[b] Three military observers and 12 medical personnel.
[c] Including the Senior Police Adviser.

Map No. 3837 Rev. 59 UNITED NATIONS
October 2008

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section